

# Waterworld

In Africa, water is life. It informs the migratory patterns of animals and it's where they socialise, play, recuperate, fight and hunt.

Waterways link human settlements and mark out the borders between countries. What would the continent be without Victoria Falls, the Okavango Delta, Lake Malawi, the Limpopo or the Kunene? But water is a scarce resource. There's never enough.

In this series of images, wildlife photographer Greg Du Toit literally went in neck-deep to capture scenes of life around waterholes and rivers, from the Okavango to Ruaha National Park in Tanzania.

Greg has lived and worked in the bush since he was 18 years old. Before he became a full-time photographer, he worked as a guide at Timbavati and as a wilderness camp manager in Tanzania.

In pursuit of winning images, Greg spends up to 1 500 hours in the field each year. He's obviously had some spectacular encounters, but it's unsurprising that his favourite encounter involves water: "I'll never forget sitting in

a waterhole on Maasai community land, photographing two lionesses drinking barely 4 m away," he says.

For Greg, wildlife photography is all about capturing a moment frozen in time, a moment that sometimes happens too fast for the human eye to register.

Most of these images were shot on film, and Greg is a purist when it comes to his craft. "I switched to digital about two years ago because image libraries no longer accept film," he says. "But I still try to do everything in-camera. I'm not a fan of Photoshop manipulation. In moving to digital, I believe that wildlife photography has lost a degree of authenticity."

His advice for beginner photographers? "Find out what it is in life that inspires you and photograph those things! And be patient."



**GREG DU TOIT**  
On my bedside table: An unread autobiography of Henry Morton Stanley.  
In my CD player: I've been listening to REM for months!

## ▶ HIPPO CAULDRON

Great Ruaha River, Tanzania

"Early one chilly winter's morning I waded through the river and lay down on a sandbank, waiting for the hippos to return to their favourite pool after a night of foraging. I knew that when the sun rose there would be a brief moment of mist on the water. I waited, hoping that an inquisitive hippo would swim by. Wary of crocodiles, I took only three frames before making a hasty retreat to safer ground."

**HOW?** Nikon F100, Nikkor 80–400 mm lens, shutter speed 1/125 second, aperture f5.6, Kodak E100VS film, SB 800 fill flash, with a beanbag.



## ▼ PERCHED AND PARCHED

*Maasai community land, Kenya/Tanzania border*

"It was late in the afternoon and just two degrees south of the equator. The sun was beating down more furiously than at any other time of day. I had embarked on a project to photograph a nomadic lion pride. As a last resort, I sat in the shallows of a waterhole in an attempt to mask my scent and shape. It worked. Even the birds flittered around me unperturbed. A twig offered a welcome drinking perch to this thirsty female beautiful sunbird."

**HOW?** Nikon F100, Nikkor 80 – 400 mm lens, shutter speed 1/250 second, aperture f5.6, Fuji Provia 100F film.



## ◀ WEAVER BATH

*Ruaha National Park, Tanzania*

"Of all the creatures that inhabited our camp in Ruaha National Park, none seemed to celebrate life as spectacularly as the tiny golden weavers. So often photographers ignore subjects that are right under their nose. I had been exploring vast tracks of tsetse-fly-ridden bush, trying to shoot skittish mammals and predators, yet each day these weavers put on an awesome display in front of my house."

**HOW?** Nikon D200, Nikkor 80 – 400 mm lens, shutter speed 1/320 second, aperture f5.6, ISO 320, with a beanbag.



## ▼ STORK AT DAWN

*Ruaha National Park, Tanzania*

"My favourite time of year in Ruaha National Park is September, when the river is reduced to a trickle and isolated pools trap shoals of fish. At dawn you can hear the sound of crocodile jaws smacking the water in an attempt to snap up fish. When the sun comes up, however, the crocs get lazy and yellow-billed storks move in for a meal of their own."

**HOW?** Nikon F100, Nikkor 80 – 400 mm lens, shutter speed 1/250 second, aperture f5.6, Fuji Provia 100F film, SB 800 fill flash, with a beanbag.

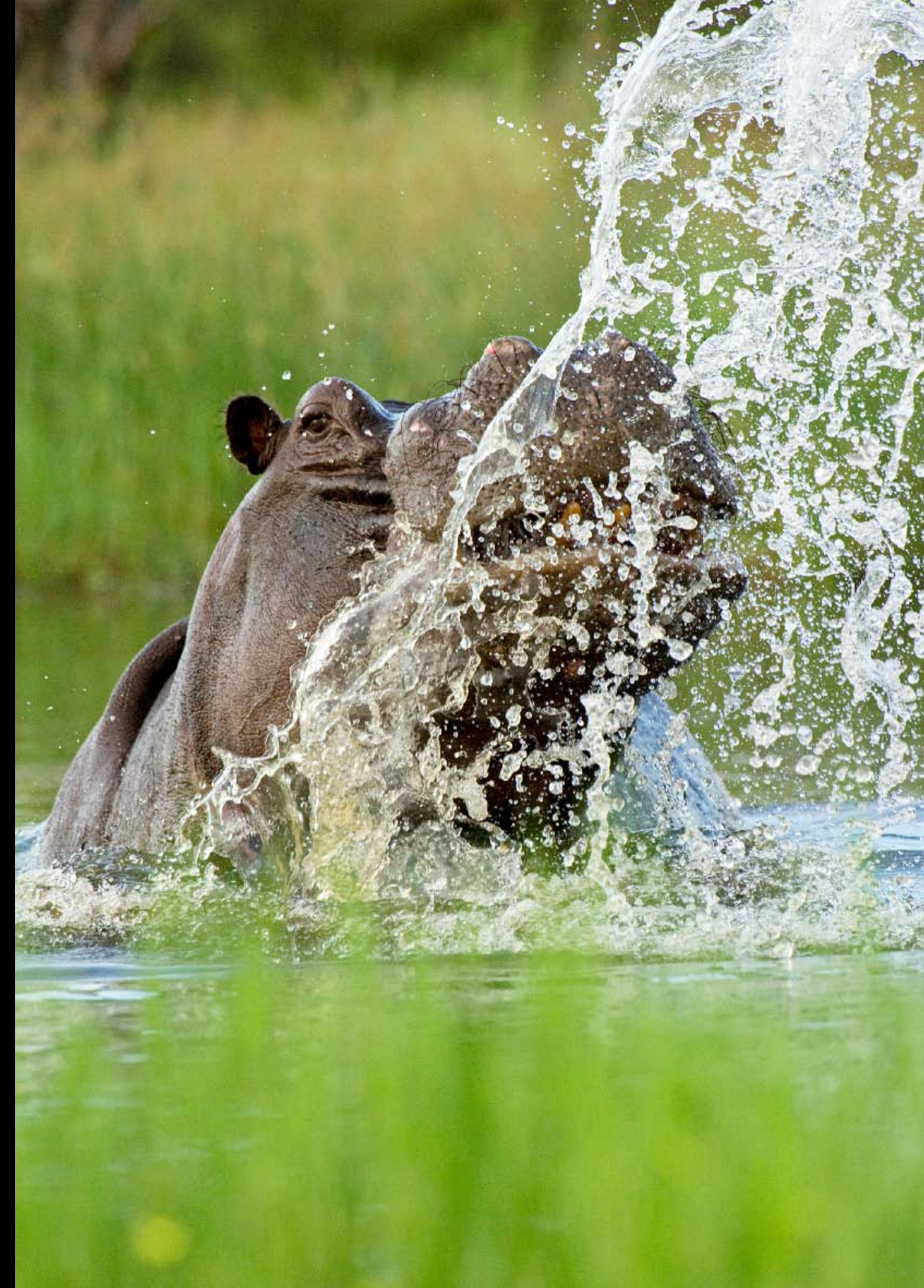


📌 THE NOMADS

*Maasai community land, Kenya/Tanzania border*

"In the months prior to shooting this picture, this lioness and her cubs stubbornly refused to drink during daylight hours. I had waited until dusk for them on numerous occasions and twice, upon walking back to camp, met all eight on foot. I never carried a rifle, as my hands were full of camera gear, and both meetings were rather surreal. The cubs were inquisitive, running forward with their ears pricked, while mom kept a beady eye on my every move. Both times I just carried on walking, talking to them as I went. I told them it was only a matter of time until I caught them drinking. Nomadic lions like these that don't live inside a protected area are fast becoming extinct in Africa, and I'm grateful to have captured this image."

**HOW?** Nikon F100 body, Nikkor 80 – 400 mm lens, 1/250 second, aperture f16, Fuji Provia 100F film, with a beanbag.



📌 SUPER SPLASH

*Okavango Delta, Botswana*

"I spend my life waiting for all the elements that make a great picture to collide in a split second. I was in the Okavango and came across this hippo in the golden afternoon light. Patience is crucial when you're working with hippo. They usually just lie around in the water, but can erupt into action at any time."

**HOW?** Nikon D3s, 200–400 mm lens with a 1.4x converter, shutter speed 1/1250 second, aperture F7.1, ISO 1250.

➤ FROM DUST  
TO DUST

*Maasai community land,  
Kenya/Tanzania border*

“The zebra in this part of the world are wild and skittish. To photograph them drinking, I dug a hole in the ground and waited patiently. It would be months before I got this shot.

The herd would approach the water tentatively, to within a few feet, before turning to bolt, only to return minutes later. This continuous to-and-fro created a large cloud of volcanic dust.

Ensconced in my hole in the ground, with the equatorial sun beating down and tsetse flies munching my flesh, sitting motionless became an extreme test of photographic passion. Eventually, one brave zebra stuck his head through the dust for a sip of water.”

**HOW?** Nikon F100, Nikkor 80 – 400 mm lens, shutter speed 1/250 second, aperture f5.6, Fuji Provia 100F film (pushed by one stop), with a beanbag.

